

**For Immediate Release:** *April 23, 2009*

**Washington DC --** Congressman Duncan D. Hunter (R-CA) introduced the Border Sovereignty and Protection Act today in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The legislation comprehensively addresses many of the enforcement challenges along the U.S.-Mexico border through the construction of additional infrastructure, interagency cooperation and stronger penalties for weapons smuggling. The legislation also sets guidelines for the expedited removal of undocumented and criminal aliens, denies State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) reimbursement for sanctuary cities and makes E-Verify mandatory.

"With border violence at record levels and Mexico's drug cartels growing in size and influence, we need to get serious about securing our borders once and for all," said Congressman Hunter. "This cannot be accomplished with infrastructure, technology or manpower alone. It will require a combination of these resources, as well as better coordination between our federal agencies and stronger enforcement of existing immigration laws.

"This legislation strengthens security along the U.S.-Mexico border through the construction of much needed infrastructure and authorizes more special agents to investigate and make arrests for cross-border criminal drug activity. The legislation also targets weapons smugglers by implementing a 15-year mandatory minimum sentence for firearms smuggling.

"Contrary to the President's recently revealed Southwest Border Initiative, we must stay focused on closing the smuggling corridors exploited by Mexico's drug cartels and other criminal aliens on a daily basis. While the Obama Administration is focused on information and technology sharing with Mexico, as well as using the situation on the border to wrongly reinstate restrictions on firearms, communities and law enforcement on both sides of the border remain under constant threat. The only way to effectively mitigate this threat is to secure the border and aggressively enforce our nation's immigration laws. Otherwise, drug cartels and criminal aliens will continue to control the Southwest Border region."

Specifically, the Border Sovereignty and Protection Act would:

- Require the construction of an additional 350 miles of double-layered, reinforced pedestrian fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border. This infrastructure would supplement the approximate 350 miles of fencing completed between October 2006 and April 1, 2009, effectively reinstating the original mandate under the Secure Fence Act for 700 miles of pedestrian fencing;
- Provide the Department of Homeland Security with legal authority to investigate criminal drug violations of the Controlled Substances Act or the Controlled Substances Import and Export Act. The authority to fully investigate drug crimes, referred to as "Title 21" authority, is currently maintained by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). The number of Homeland Security agents that can investigate transnational drug cases is arbitrarily limited by DEA. For example, only 1,500 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents - a force that exceeds 6,000 special agents, are currently permitted to investigate criminal drug cases. Nearly 5,000 ICE agents who are fully trained in all aspects of border crime are prohibited from participating in these investigations;
- Increase the mandatory minimum sentence for all weapons smuggling offenses to 15 years. Weapons smugglers are often prosecuted under "non-trafficking" statutes that make it unlawful for certain persons to be in possession of firearms or import/export any merchandise, material or object contrary to U.S. laws;
- Deny reimbursement for SCAAP funding for state and local governments that maintain sanctuary policies and prohibit local law enforcement officials from gathering data or information on an individual's immigration status;
- Permit immigration officers to expeditiously remove undocumented aliens not continuously present in the U.S. for three years unless that individual has been charged with a crime or is seeking asylum;
- Permit the Secretary of Homeland Security to expeditiously remove criminal aliens;
- Require all employers to verify the immigration status of employees through the E-Verify system.

The Border Sovereignty and Protection Act, which has been referred to the House Homeland Security and Judiciary Committees, is cosponsored by Reps: Bilbray, Poe, Royce, Campbell, Marchant, Alexander, Rohrabacher, Calvert, Akin, Franks and Gary Miller.